COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

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COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS is intended to provide quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). It is produced regularly throughout the academic year. This issue covers the months of November and December 2005.

Former Premier Bob Rae honoured with David Smith Award

At a dinner held in Toronto on December 15, 2005, the fifth annual David C. Smith Award for Significant Contribution to Scholarship and Policy on Higher Education in Canada was presented to former Premier Bob Rae. In his recent role as Advisor to the Premier and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Mr. Rae led a comprehensive review of the postsecondary education system in the province that resulted in sweeping public policy recommendations, many of which were reflected in the 2005 Ontario Budget.

The award celebrates the distinguished contributions that the late Dr. Smith made to scholarship and policy in higher education. To further broaden awareness of issues in higher education and the relationship between public policy and higher education, each recipient is invited to speak to a subject related to the award's theme. At this year's dinner, following the presentation of the award by Rev. Mary Smith (Dr. Smith's widow), Mr. Rae spoke about the review, key recommendations and his vision for the future of higher education in Ontario. Both a video and a hard copy of his presentation will be available on COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca) early in the new year.

The dinner was also attended by Peter Wallace, Deputy Minister and Associate Secretary of Cabinet, Policy; Deputy Ministers Colin Andersen (Finance), Bill Forward (Training, Colleges and Universities) and Dr. Timothy McTiernan (Research and Innovation); Phil Howell, Associate Deputy Minister, Finance; 2003 award recipient Dr. James Downey, Director of the Waterloo Centre for the Advancement of Co-operative Education and former University of Waterloo President and Council Chair; a number of other special guests; and members of Council.

Other David Smith Award winners are Dr. David Cameron, then-Chair of the Department of Political Science, Dalhousie University; J. Robert S. Prichard, President and CEO of the Torstar Media Group, former President of the University of Toronto and former Chair of Council; and Dr. Bernard Shapiro, Ethics Commissioner of Canada, and Past Principal and Vice-Chancellor of McGill University.

Nursing schools receive $10 million for clinical simulation, second year in a row

On November 16, 2005, the Ontario government committed another $10 million in funding for clinical simulation equipment for nursing students in the province. This investment follows up on the government's December 2004 announcement in which a number of initiatives were introduced that would support nurses at all stages of their career.

This is the second consecutive year that nursing schools were allotted $10 million in funding to purchase clinical simulators – innovative teaching tools that enable nursing students to experience hands-on clinical practice in simulated situations as part of their undergraduate education. The Clinical Simulation Initiative is one component of the government's plan to improve access to full-time employment opportunities and enhance working conditions for nurses in Ontario's hospitals.

$33 million invested in family medicine residency positions over three years

On November 17, 2005, the Ontario government announced a further $33 million over the next three years to support the training of an additional 141 family physicians each year. This announcement follows the government's March 2005 commitment to increase Ontario's supply of family physicians by creating 70% more family medicine residency positions at the province's five medical schools.

The investment will provide $10 million in capital funding for family medicine teaching sites associated with McMaster University, the University of Ottawa, the University of Toronto and the University of Western Ontario. It will also provide $23 million in operating funding over three years to support the increased costs associated with training more family medicine residents. (Queen's University, in addition to the University of Western Ontario, had received funding in March when the expansion to the family medicine program was first announced.)

This increase in family medicine positions means there will be 337 additional family physicians ready to practise in Ontario by 2008. This funding is part of the government's multi-year plan to address Ontario's future requirements for physicians.

EKOS study on Ontarians' perceptions of tuition and funding

In 2005, COU commissioned a study on the public's perceptions of the Ontario university funding environment, and the findings of the study were detailed in the report, *Ontario Universities: Public Perceptions of Tuition and Funding*. The report summarizes the study's findings according to key topics: broad perceptions, access and affordability, perceptions of Ontario universities, tuition fees and their regulation, student assistance, investments and funding, and recent provincial government investments.

EKOS Research Associates conducted the 2005 study, which builds on its earlier (2003) COU-commissioned study on public perceptions of quality in Ontario universities. For a copy of the report, visit the COU web site (www.cou.on.ca).

2005 report on the physical condition of university buildings now available

COU recently published the 2005 annual report of the *Ontario Universities' Facilities Condition Assessment Program* overseen by the Joint Task Force of the Council of Senior Administrative Officers (CSAO) and the Ontario Association of Physical Plant Administrators (OAPPA). The report analyzes the findings of the comprehensive audit program, which assesses the physical condition of buildings at Ontario universities by evaluating deferred maintenance and adaptation renovation deficiencies – the major repairs and replacements to buildings, equipment and infrastructure that have been deferred to a future budget cycle.

The 2005 report shows that the overall Facilities Condition Index (FCI) system average is 0.10, a slight improvement over 2004's figure of 0.11 (although largely attributable to the construction of new buildings). Buildings with an FCI of greater than 0.10 are considered to be in poor condition. While the FCI has improved, deficiencies have actually increased by 6% or approximately $100 million, bringing the total cost of deficiencies to $1.6 billion. In addition, there has been a 10% increase in the Current Replacement Value of the audited buildings from $13.9 billion in 2004 to $15.3 billion in 2005.

For a copy of the report, visit the COU web site (www.cou.on.ca).

Government, postsecondary institutions host energy conservation symposium

On November 21 and 22, 2005, the Ministry of Energy, in collaboration with the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO) and COU, hosted Energy Savings and Capital Renewal, an energy conservation symposium for postsecondary institutions.

The participants – approximately 120 representatives from Ontario's colleges and universities – were greeted by Donna Cansfield, Minister of Energy; Richard Patten, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities; Peter Love, Chief Energy Conservation Officer; David Lindsay, President, ACAATO; and Jamie Mackay, Vice-President, Policy and Analysis, COU.

The two-day event focused on a range of incentives and financing mechanisms for projects and examined case studies of energy saving projects underway at colleges and universities across the province, including projects at Lakehead, McMaster, Queen's and York universities.

Presenters included Mario Bouchard, Director, Physical Resources, University of Ottawa, and President, Ontario Association of Physical Plant Administrators, with Carol Anderson, Director of Facilities Management, Humber Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. Private-sector energy companies also made presentations and provided exhibits on energy saving technologies.

Ontario universities are at the forefront of energy conservation and are willing to do much more for environmental and financial benefits (energy costs are an escalating expenditure for universities). While it is hoped there will be increases in financial incentives for more projects, universities were encouraged by the Energy Conservation Bureau's willingness to provide some resources to assist in setting up additional energy conversation projects. The symposium was held at the Guelph-Humber building, developed through the partnership of the University of Guelph and the Humber Institute.

Executive Heads formally installed

The month of November saw the installation ceremony of three Executive Heads:

- Dr. David Atkinson as President and Vice-Chancellor of Carleton University, on November 12.
- Sheldon Levy as President and Vice-Chancellor of Ryerson University, on November 2.
- Dr. David Naylor as President of the University of Toronto, on November 7.

Sara Diamond will be formally installed as President of the Ontario College of Art & Design on March 9, 2006.

Royal Assent given to bills ending mandatory retirement, implementing FIPPA

On December 12, 2005, two bills received Royal Assent: Bill 211, *Ending Mandatory Retirement Statute Law Amendment Act*, with provisions that will come into effect in one year; and Bill 197, *Budget Measures Act*, which includes the provisions bringing universities under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and these will come into effect in 180 days.

COU Secretariat holds information session for Executive Heads' EAs

On November 11, 2005, the COU Secretariat hosted an information session for the executive and administrative assistants of Executive Heads of Ontario universities. The all-day session included an overview of COU and the Ontario Universities' Application Centre; a presentation on COU's recent public awareness initiatives and its study on public perceptions of tuition and funding; an introduction to the COU portal; and a roundtable on challenges and issues affecting their office.

Update on year three of audits of undergraduate program reviews

An audit process of Ontario universities' undergraduate program reviews was established in the academic year 1996-97, and over a seven-year cycle, each university was visited by a team of auditors who assessed that institution's undergraduate program reviews according to guidelines issued by the Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee (UPRAC) on behalf of the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV). Each audit consists of a detailed assessment of the university's documentation, an on-site visit and a submission of a report of the team's findings.

In year three (the academic year 2005-2006) of the second cycle of audits, Queen's University was visited by the auditors in November, the University of Windsor will be visited in early January, and the site visit to Nipissing University is scheduled for March. In 2005, OCAV received auditors' reports for the University of Guelph, McMaster University, Laurentian University and Redeemer University College.

In May, OCAV elected Dr. Ken Norrie (McMaster University) to replace Dr. Greg Moran (University of Western Ontario) on the UPRAC and the OCAV Executive Committee.

OCAV hosts workshop on learning outcomes

On November 2, 2005, OCAV hosted a workshop at Ryerson University on Learning Outcomes and Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations. The purpose of the workshop was to assist participants – academic vice-presidents, faculty-teaching development officers and those staff responsible for undergraduate program reviews – in helping students to increase the attainment of intended learning outcomes and, as a result, improve the quality of student engagement.

A fond farewell to a member of the Secretariat

After more than 23 years of dedicated service to the COU Secretariat, Sylvia Reesor, Manager of Financial Services, retired on November 30, 2005. Sylvia worked closely with virtually every division at COU as well as with a number of COU's committees and affiliates. Her extensive experience, knowledge and spirit of co-operation made her a mainstay at the Secretariat throughout her career at COU. The management and staff of COU would like to extend to Sylvia best wishes for the future.

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